



Putting your vision into a plan

The key to effective career planning is to begin with a vision and then incorporate it into a plan. Ask yourself, “What vision do I have in my career as a dental hygienist?” A vision is finding meaning and purpose in your life through perseverance in order to find happiness in your career and to enhance your personal growth and well being.

Jack Canfield, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul*® series with Janet Switzer, and author of *The Success Principles™ How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, describes vision as “a detailed description of where you want to get to and it describes what your destination looks like and feels like.”¹ As Pat Croce quotes in his book, *Lead or Get Off the Pot! The Seven Secrets of a Self-Made Leader*, “vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.” Pat defines vision as “a complex plan with a singular focused purpose. It is the fusion of a goal, the actions that need to reach the goal, and

Take the time to ...
evaluate what
you have
accomplished and
where you plan
to go.

the attitude that must always color the vision.”²

You must know where you are going, in order to determine the steps you will take to achieve success in your career as a dental hygiene professional. As Stephen Covey defines in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: “Begin with the end in mind.”³

In *The Success Principles*, Canfield states, “that you can achieve unimagined levels of success by 1) identifying what it is you want 2) believe you deserve it” 3) utilize his success principles written in his book.”⁴ You may want to make an investment and buy his book. His principles are interesting and applicable to any career.

Your vision will need to be short, motivating and compelling, and creates a picture through words. The vision should be effective and help elevate you to a new career plateau. It also should be placed in an area where you will see it often and be reminded of what you need to do.

What will help you to achieve your vision? You will need confidence, competence, and capability. Confidence,

of course, is the ability to believe in yourself, feel that you deserve success, and are worthy of your vision. You gain confidence by concentrating on the talents and attributes you have developed that make you unique and special. Competence is the ability to be educated and to have the knowledge and training and skills necessary to successfully complete tasks and solve problems. Capability is the ability to create, define, and control your own life through discipline and hard work, and by developing your professional career goal plan.

I want you to think about your vision statement and then write it down on a piece of paper. I would like you to explain where you see your career going as a dental hygienist. Are you excited about your career? Do you need to rethink it and recharge it to bring it to a more important level? Determining your vision will positively affect your dental hygiene career by:

- Providing the direction you want to achieve in the future.
- Helping you set goals and objectives for your career path.
- Determining the expertise and values you have, and what area of dental hygiene you might like to focus your career.

Now that you have written down your vision, which is the first step in defining what you want to accomplish in your career, we will need to define two important components of the Career Development Plan (see related sidebar): goals and objectives. These two important components will help to define what is important to you in achieving success in your career.

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Professional Savvy™ Career Development Plan

(As you answer the questions below, please consider using a separate sheet of paper; more than likely you will need more writing space than what RDH is able to provide here.)

I. Your vision

1. What vision do you see for yourself, as it relates to your career in dental hygiene?

II. Personal skills assessment

1. What are my relevant skills in dental hygiene?

2. What is my educational background?

3. What experience and training have I developed as a dental hygienist?

III. Goals and objectives for your position within the Dental Hygiene Profession for the next three years.

1.) What goal(s) will need to be accomplished to help me achieve my ideal position in the next three years?

Goal: _____

Goal: _____

2. Prioritize the goals, if more than one goal.

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

3. What objective(s) will need to be accomplished to help me achieve the goals for the position I want within the dental hygiene profession?

Goal 1, Objective 1: _____

Goal 2, Objective 1: _____

4. Determine the length of time needed to achieve your objectives and if you require assistance from anyone to obtain them.

Goal 1, Objective 1: _____

Goal 2, Objective 1: _____

5. Determine the date you accomplished your goal(s).

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

IV. Future goals, objectives, and skills assessment

1. What are my future goal(s) in the next three to five years?

Goal: _____

Goal: _____

2. Prioritize these goals.

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

3. What objective(s) will need to be accomplished to help me achieve the goals for the position I want to work in within the dental hygiene profession in the next 3-5 years?

Goal 1, Objective 1: _____

Goal 1, Objective 2: _____

Goal 2, Objective 1: _____

Goal 2, Objective 2: _____

3. What skills do I need to develop to achieve my 3-5 year goals and objectives?

4. Is further education or courses required to achieve my 3-5 year goals and objectives? If yes, describe.

5. Is there any training required to achieve my 3-5 year goals and objectives? If yes, describe

6. What professional organizations do I need to become a member of in order to network and meet colleagues within the dental hygiene profession?

7. What individuals do I need to meet with in order to assist me in achieving my 3-5 year goals and objectives?

V. Networking strategies

1. Do I know someone who has attained the position that I am pursuing? If yes, who is the person and how do I contact them?

1a. If no, how can I find the person to contact?

2. Are there any of my professional contacts who might help me? (past professors, associates, mentors, and colleagues)

3. Are there any professional organizations I can join and learn more about on their websites?

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A goal is the “purpose” toward which an endeavor is directed.⁵ It is explaining what you want to achieve. A goal is an end toward which you direct specific effort.⁶ Let’s review an example of a goal. “I would like to work in a state-of-the-art periodontal practice.” The steps involved in determining how you would obtain a job in such a practice are part of the objective strategy. Objectives are defined as something worked toward or striven for, or an aim that guides an action.⁷

Strategies or implementation steps that are conducted to attain an identified goal.

There are three elements to an objective:

- An accomplishment to be achieved
- A measurable outcome
- A specific date/time to accomplish the associated objective

An example of four objectives for the sample goal of working in a state-of-the-art periodontal practice are:

❑ Objective 1: Determine the area of the country you want to work in as a dental hygienist.

❑ Objective 2: Identify possession of dental hygiene licensure in the state you want to work and reside in.

❑ Objective 3: Determine how many periodontal practices are in the area you are interested in working in.

❑ Objective 4: Establish a resume that defines the skills and abilities you have obtained as a dental hygiene professional, that qualifies you to work in a periodontal practice setting.

Now, let’s get started on your personal Career Development Plan defined by Professional Savvy™.

The Career Development Plan will help guide you in defining what your goals and objectives are for your dental hygiene career. You are in control of your own destiny and you will determine the career path that interests you the most, through effective career planning. Remember that your goals and objectives will change from year to year, depending upon how much of a priority the goal is for your personal career growth. Take the time to sit down and evaluate what you have accomplished and where you plan to go, in order to find the position that you want.

In order to achieve success in your career, consider including the following career plan strategies:

- Write down your career goals and objectives each year, and assess the outcome of achieving them.
- Update your resume and curriculum vitae on an annual basis.
- Learn how to write an effective cover letter.
- Identify sources of information for the job opportunity that you are interested in.
- List the contacts you have established in your professional network.
- Utilize the contacts within your professional network to obtain information about job opportunities.
- Add additional contacts to your network to expand it each year.

- Enhance your knowledge in conducting an effective and successful interview.

- Know how to “close the deal” to obtain the job, salary, and benefits you want.

- Always write a thank-you letter after the interview.

- Develop your “Professional Career Portfolio,” to document your career achievements and successes, and utilize this in your future job interview(s).

One of the most important things that I learned as a dental hygienist was to become a member of my professional organization, the American Dental Hygienists’ Association (ADHA). I have learned many things from this important organization. I became involved with my constituent and served in many different roles, including President of the State of New Jersey in 1993. Also, for four years I was involved in the Council on Public Relations within the ADHA, which enabled me to learn aspects of this important area, understand the activities ADHA was involved in, and network with many great dental hygienists from across the country. I can only tell you that becoming a member of ADHA will help you to become involved in your component and constituent, and even on a national level, if you desire.

Please consider attending an ADHA Annual Session, in order to meet dental hygienists working in the same, as well as different areas, and learn about opportunities within the profession. You will be able to network with these individuals and make decisions about which direction to take your career in dental hygiene. Utilize your professors as mentors, to help guide you and provide you with their expertise in areas of dental hygiene that you may want to pursue. If you have a mentor, contact them to keep them abreast of your successes, and areas that you want to improve within your career.

In my opinion, I feel that dental hygiene is a career, not a job and we need to bring our career to a new plateau through effective career planning. Knowing that there is no end to the possibilities you can create, and the plan you put into place, will help you to achieve the goals for your dental hygiene career. Please visit my corporate Web site at www.professionalsavvyhd.com and look for my new soft covered book, “Professional Savvy Achieving Success in Your Dental Hygiene Career,” on my Web site or on the www.AuthorHouse.com Web site. Best wishes and good luck in pursuing your career goals as a dental hygiene professional.

References:

- 1 Canfield, Jack and Switzer, Janet. *The Success Principles How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*. New York, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 2005, 29-31.
- 2 Croce, Pat. *Lead or Get Off The Pot! The Seven Secrets of a Self-Made Leader*. New York, Fireside, 2004, 1-5.
- 3 Covey, Stephen. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York, Free Press, 1989, 145-150.
- 4 Canfield, Jack and Switzer, Janet. *The Success Principles How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*. New York, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 2005, Introduction, 27-33.
- 5 American Heritage Dictionary online, 2005.
- 6 Blair, Gary Ryan. *Goal Setting 101*. USA, GoalsGuy Learning Systems, Inc., 2004, 7.
- 7 American Heritage Dictionary online, 2005